



## **Press Release**

### **BTS and GRACE Offer Historic Seminary Course on Child Sexual Abuse**

“A primary reason why abuse victims are afraid of the church is because of the level of immaturity and ignorance they have experienced in how they are treated or handled by the community and leadership of a church.” – *child sexual abuse survivor*

Sexual abuse of children within faith communities is an extremely complex topic, and failing to comprehend and address it can have devastating and lifelong consequences. Yet, research shows that only about three percent of seminaries provide any preparation in child abuse prevention and response (according to the National Child Protection Training Center). Church leaders must be educated before-the-job, not on-the-job. Education about child sex abuse must be in tandem with education on studying scripture, preaching, counseling, and administration.

Biblical Theological Seminary (BTS) has teamed up with Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (GRACE) to offer a first of its kind, 3-credit-hour seminary course that will educate, train, and equip future pastors and church staff members on protecting children from offenders and serving adult survivors of child sexual abuse. GRACE worked with the National Child Protection Training Center and a team of Christian theologians, pastors, counselors, and child protection professionals to craft this historic course.

In describing the need for this course, GRACE’s executive director, Boz Tchividjian, stated, “The on-the-job training of pastors and other faith leaders in preventing and responding to child sexual abuse isn’t working – it is dangerous and all too often has devastating consequences.

On-the-job training all too often results in greater harm to the very individuals who are most in need of protection and help.”

The course, offered in June, 2017, will cover topics such as:

- Definitions and common dynamics of child abuse in its many permutations
- Common spiritual, health, and mental health impacts of child sexual abuse
- The common behavioral characteristics of child sex offenders
- Biblical and theological foundations for child protection
- Best practices in child protection policies, including mandated reporting laws and our moral obligation to report abuse
- Best practices in responding to active sexual abuse allegations and dealing with past abuse
- Components of a safe and supportive environment for survivors at church
- The purpose and value of professional mental health care for victims and perpetrators

“The church must be a safe place for all, especially children. If the church is to fulfill its divine mandate, its followers must ensure that it is a protected environment where children can grow and reach their full potential. Jesus said “let the children come to me” and that presupposes that the church is a warm, nurturing and very safe place.” – Dr. Frank James, President of Biblical Theological Seminary

This course is a significant step forward in creating a Christian community that better protects children and walks alongside survivors.

This course is currently open for enrollment. To learn more or to enroll, contact the Biblical Seminary academic office: [academic@biblical.edu](mailto:academic@biblical.edu) or 215-368-5000 X143

To learn more about this curriculum or the work of GRACE, please contact Boz Tchividjian at [boz@netgrace.org](mailto:boz@netgrace.org).